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MEMORANDUM

January 7, 1959

FOR: The Honorable
Allen Dulles
Central Intelligence Agency

FROM: John A. Calhoun
Director
Executive Secretariat

Enclosed, for your information and files, is a copy of the memorandum of a conversation between the Secretary and Deputy Premier Mikoyan on January 5.

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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 5, 1959

SUBJECT: U.S.-Soviet Relations

PARTICIPANTS: Anastas I. Mikoyan, Deputy Premier of the USSR;
John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State;
Mikhail A. Menshikov, Soviet Ambassador;
Livingston T. Merchant, Assistant Secretary of State;
Oleg A. Troyanovski, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, USSR;
Llewellyn E. Thompson, American Ambassador to Moscow;
Edward L. Freers, Director, Office of Eastern European Affairs.

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Mr. Mikoyan opened the conversation by recalling that he had been to the United States before on an unofficial visit and had talked to Secretary of State Cordell Hull in the company of Mr. Troyanovski's father.

The Secretary recalled that he had been at a dinner in Moscow in April 1947 at which Mr. Mikoyan was present but he was not sure whether or not they had met each other on that occasion.

Mr. Mikoyan said that they had met but had not had the opportunity to have a conversation.

The Secretary said that he was happy that Mr. Mikoyan had come to visit the United States. He thought these unofficial visits were extremely useful as a means of eliminating misunderstanding and affording a better appreciation of what were real differences between us and what were not. He said there are real problems, but there is no reason for making them worse and sharpening our differences by creating imaginary and fictitious problems.

Mr. Mikoyan agreed and said it was important to continue these visits. It was always better to avoid differences and reach solutions to problems. This was understood back home and hence Prime Minister Khrushchev had asked him to convey his greetings to the Secretary as had Foreign Minister Gromyko. The Prime Minister had even asked Mikoyan to tell the Secretary that although they two exchanged strong words in the press and otherwise, this was not the main thing. The main thing was to work for peace.

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The Secretary

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The Secretary recalled the contacts he had had with Prime Minister Khrushchev in Geneva in 1955 and Mikoyan remarked that Khrushchev had indeed told them about this.

Mikoyan said that there was one thing which was not quite clear to them. At one time the United States accused the Soviet Union of following a hard line. It charged the Soviet leaders with saying "nyet, nyet, nyet" all the time. Now when the Soviet Union seemed to be following a more flexible line, it was the American Government which said "no, no, no" all the time. There had been a change in roles.

The Secretary interrupted to say that Mikoyan would be given the opportunity to say "da, da, da" if he so desired.

Mikoyan made the rejoinder that he would like this to correspond to the real position.

The Secretary made the point that he did not understand that Mr. Mikoyan was here to carry on negotiations on any particular topic, but he did hope that there would be an opportunity to exchange views on the matters that divide us.

Mikoyan said that this was the case.

The Secretary said that he had just been saying to his associates in the Department that ever since he had come into contact with Soviet officials--that is since the San Francisco meeting in 1945--he had found it extremely difficult to have a serious discussion with any of them on the matters that gave rise to tension and even involved risks of war. For example, one thing that concerned us very greatly were the goals and ambitions of the International Communist Movement and the extent to which this movement was supported by the Soviet Union. When he had talked to Molotov about this, the latter had said that there was no such thing as the International Communist Movement. The Secretary found it hard to carry on a conversation in such a situation. We have no quarrel, he said, with the Soviet Union as a State. We were delighted to see it grow in power and welfare--this would give us no concern at all. It is the extent to which that power is placed at the disposition of the International Communist Movement, which has goals incompatible with our own safety, that causes concern on our part.

With regard to Germany, the Secretary continued, we recognize that it is a serious problem. We have been twice at war with Germany and although they had not been as costly to us as to the Soviet Union, these wars had been costly and unpleasant affairs for us. We understand quite well the desire of the Soviet Union that Germany should not again become a military menace and share its feelings on the question as what to do to prevent it from becoming that. The danger in the situation arises from the fact that the Soviet Union has one solution and we have another. Out of our differences, there may emerge another dangerous Germany. These are the kind of things that might be useful to arrange for another talk of perhaps several hours duration while Mr. Mikoyan is here.

Mikoyan

Mikoyan said that he was available, if the Secretary were so disposed, and that further conversation could be held either now or at a later date. In answer to the Secretary's question as to whether or not he were leaving town tomorrow, Mikoyan said that he was a man on holiday and that it would be easy for him to adjust his plans for the Secretary's convenience. He could talk tomorrow all day, or some other day. The Secretary said that it would be better to plan further talks when Mr. Mikoyan came back from his trip. He said that the President would like to talk to Mr. Mikoyan as well.

Mr. Mikoyan then reverted to the Secretary's remark about his conversation with Molotov. Mikoyan said that since Molotov had not explained the matter of International Communism to the Secretary, he would explain it. The Secretary interjected the remark that Molotov had not only not explained it, he had said it didn't exist. Mikoyan said it was not a subject for discussion between states, but since this was an informal talk, he would elaborate on the matter. The Communist movement had been in evidence wherever a working class existed, even before the USSR came into being. The Soviets believed, he said, that the ideas of Communism will continue to strengthen. Experience showed that the ways in which it would develop would be different. They believed that this was an affair for each country, its working class and its people. They did not conceal the fact that they sympathized with this development. They do not, however, interfere in the internal affairs of other Communist parties and of other countries. The United States had an intelligence service, with the Secretary's brother at its head. Perhaps he understood this. Several million people voted for the Communist parties in Italy and France. In England, there wasn't a single Communist member of Parliament. In the United States there was no Communist member of Congress. Why was the United States so fearful--even more than France or Italy--although Communist strength in the United States was negligible? In order to understand the Soviets correctly, he continued, it must be recognized that there is a difference between the Communist Party and the Soviet State. There are examples which illustrate this. The Soviet Union has good relations with the UAR. Khrushchev met and talked with the President and Vice President of the UAR, even though they not only do not protect Communists but they attack them and put them in prison. In the USSR there are no political prisoners. The Soviets cannot sympathize with Nasser for arresting political prisoners, especially Communists, but they do consider this an internal matter. Conditions call for this. The Soviet leaders had had many friendly talks with the President and Vice President of the UAR, but there had been no talks about this. This is regarded as an internal matter. The Soviet leaders had very good relations with Afghanistan--with the King and Prime Minister--although there are no Communists in that country. They have good relations with Nepal and its King, although they have never heard of any Communists in that country. They have good relations with Kekkonnen, the President of Finland, where there is a large Communist party. Mikoyan said he had good relations with Mr. Hansen, the Prime Minister of Denmark, which is a member of NATO. He had tried to prevail on him to leave NATO but had had no success. Mikoyan said that he wanted the Secretary to believe that this was the truth. Had they acted in any other way, the Soviets would have been the enemies of Communism.

Mikoyan

Mikoyan turned to the German problem, which he agreed was a very serious one. He said there was no point in analyzing how the problem began or who was to blame. This would lead to no useful purpose. The Soviet Government thought that the United States had acted wrongly in arming Germany and in bringing it into NATO. The United States perhaps thought the same thing about Soviet action in East Germany. He said that we should leave the past to history and deal with the situation in Germany as it is. There is a West German state and an East German state and a Berlin occupied by the Allies. The Soviets recognized all these facts, the United States only part of them. The latter denied the fact of the existence of the German Democratic Republic. This attitude of the United States did not interfere with this fact. It might even be a source of strength for the GDR. The East Germans had been behind in their living standards but these were now improving and there was a great consolidation of social forces taking place in East Germany. It was not only the Communists who supported the GDR but also Christian Democrats and Liberals. Mikoyan said that American views of the situation were wrong and they led to errors in policy. The Soviet Union could not demand the liquidation of Adenauer and the GFR. On the contrary, it recognized them. But Adenauer demanded, and the United States supported this demand, that the GDR should not be recognized, but, on the contrary, that it should be engulfed by West Germany. Adenauer wanted no other kind of unity but engulfment. That was the problem. The important thing was that there was a strong GDR and also that Soviet troops were there. The Secretary asked him to repeat this latter remark, which he did. The Soviet Union was allied with the GDR, he said, through the Warsaw Pact, as the United States was with West Germany in NATO. Due to the Adenauer policy, the reunification of Germany has been postponed for an indefinite period. The Soviets thought that it was necessary to recognize the facts and take them into account. The Soviet view was that a peace treaty should be signed and if it were, the danger of war would be diminished. What had happened? The Czechs and the Poles had been our allies in the last war but today the Adenauer government did not even recognize them. Adenauer may not like Ulbricht or East Germany but what right does he have not to recognize Czechoslovakia or Poland? Mikoyan said he had told Adenauer this in a frank talk with him.

Mikoyan said he told Adenauer that it was not in German interests to have no relations with Poland and Czechoslovakia. Adenauer had told him that he was thinking of recognizing the governments of these countries, but that he was afraid that the Russians would be opposed. Mikoyan replied to him that they only welcomed this. Adenauer said that he would do it. Mikoyan said that Foreign Minister Brentano kept silent during the course of this conversation, but that Adenauer had been firm about taking this step. However, following the talk, Adenauer had made a statement about the frontier. It was true that Adenauer had said that any change in the frontier should occur through peaceful processes, but still he had called for a change. He should understand that he cannot change the frontier by peaceful means. It should be clear that the Poles and the Czechs (sic) would never agree to any change. Any talk about changing the frontier would lead to dangerous consequences. It alarmed the Poles and the Czechs, rallied them together and increased anti-American feeling. If a peace treaty were concluded, it would fix the frontier and no one would dare to talk about change. A peace treaty would weaken these disruptive influences.

The Secretary asked whether it should be understood that Mikoyan was talking about a peace treaty with two Germanies, without any preliminary union.

Mikoyan replied affirmatively, saying that he believed there could be a peace treaty without reunification, although it would be preferable to have prior reunification. The leaders of West Germany, he went on, say that there should either be full unity or none. Full unity was unrealistic. Union on the basis of confederation was realistic. He said that while the Secretary knew the history of the United States better than he did, it was his impression that there had been a time when unity of government had been achieved on the basis of confederation. The same had been the case in the USSR. From 1919 to 1924 the relations between the various republics had been based on confederation. Any simple merger in Germany raised the question as to what would happen to the two differing social systems. The German workers in East Germany would defend the socialist system. Also the workers of West Germany stand for nationalization. In any such merger there would be great complications. While the establishment of a confederation would make possible the retention of the social systems existing in the two parts, there would be certain common functions. These common functions would grow and develop a feeling of confidence. Now there not only was no confidence but not even any relations between the two parts of Germany.

Mikoyan said that just before he left Moscow, the Soviet Government had been discussing the question of proposing to the other allies the drafting of a peace treaty for Germany. It intended to suggest the calling of a peace conference in two months and would present a draft treaty. It would be glad to have proposals from the United States or any amendments to its proposals. The Soviet Government would seek with all the means at its disposal to move ahead on this. It regarded it as a peaceful step and would be very persistent. The time had come to put an end to the remnants of war. If we waited on reunification which would be a drawn-out business, we would have to wait to put an end to the consequences of war. The Soviet Government regarded the provisions of the draft treaty proposed by it as being normal and acceptable. There was nothing communistic about this. The Soviet Government regarded as a very important point the question as to what was to be done with the foreign troops in Germany after the peace treaty. It favored withdrawal in a short time. If it were not being realistic about the matter and the United States were not prepared for this, it was the Soviet desire to reach a common policy and it would be prepared to seek alternative solutions. One of these might be to have one-third of the foreign troops withdrawn within six months after the conclusion of a peace treaty and to leave the question of full withdrawal and the dates concerned for decision in the future. Mikoyan said that he had an aide-memoire on the question which he would be glad to leave with the Secretary.

Mikoyan then suggested that the Secretary might be interested in the question of Berlin. Mikoyan said that before his departure from Moscow, the US note on Berlin had been received. It would be discussed by the Soviet Government and a reply sent. His first impression was that the United States either did not understand the Soviet position or for the benefit of Adenauer or someone else it had presented this position in a distorted manner. The positive side of the note is what the Soviets understand as our desire to have negotiations.

As to the distortion of the Soviet position, it would seem from the note that it was the United States that was fighting for the rights of the citizens of West Berlin and the Soviet Union that wanted to suppress them. This was fundamentally wrong. The Soviet Union did not want to extract an advantage from the situation. It did not want to be in a new unequal position, nor did it want to undermine the position of the United States, Britain and France. All the talk about any lack of face which might result from this had no foundation. The Soviet Union wanted the freedom of West Berlin guaranteed not by the bayonets of occupation forces but by the Four Powers, by the two German States, and by the UN. It wanted all countries to have free access to Berlin. Mikoyan repeated that the USSR wanted the guarantees of freedom to be assured by the Four Powers, by the two Germanies, and by other countries and that it was prepared to have the UN participate. Mikoyan said that he wanted to add something that had not been in the other note (the Soviet note of November 27 ?). The Soviet Union proposed the establishment of a permanent commission composed of the United States, the USSR and others, to guarantee noninterference in the affairs of Berlin.

There had been talk of how West Berlin would survive economically. It would flourish. It would get orders from the United States and the Soviet Union. Everyone would be interested in having West Berlin develop. We could cooperate in protecting West Berlin as a unity not as occupying forces, but on a genuine basis. There had been talk about the Soviet proposal to the effect that it is an ultimatum or a threat. Mikoyan did not see the basis for this. The Soviet Union had not threatened military action of any sort. On the contrary, it had proposed negotiations. There had been certain generals who had made threats about tanks being used to break through to Berlin. It was clear that the tanks of one side would be met by the tanks of the other side. Neither side should threaten the other. The Soviet Union did not want war and did not think that the United States wanted war. If we could sit down and discuss the matter calmly, we could make West Berlin a model city with no interference in its internal affairs. What surprised the Soviet Union was that, while it continued to advance positive and constructive proposals, it had met with nothing new from the United States. The latter had not even said how long the occupation would last. The fact that the Soviet Union talked about six months--which was long enough for any negotiations on the matter--did not mean that this was an ultimatum or a threat. It was quite natural that the state on whose territory Berlin was situated should carry out such functions.

The Secretary said that he was very glad to have the assurance of Mr. Mikoyan that the Soviet note was not designed as a threat or ultimatum, otherwise any negotiation would be impossible. With regard to what Mikoyan called the occupation of Berlin, the latter's picture was not accurate. The fact was that the people of West Berlin looked upon the British, French and US forces as the guarantee of their freedom and independence and not as unfriendly occupation forces. If these troops left, there would surely be serious panic in West Berlin. Mikoyan spoke of making West Berlin a model city. It already was one. Mikoyan interrupted to say "But it is occupied". The Secretary rejoined that you could call it occupied or defended. He had been in West Berlin in May. He had been impressed by the vigorous vitality of the city, the apartment buildings, and so

forth. It was a very fine city today. It was hard to avoid the suspicion that West Berlin was, in fact, too vigorous and prosperous not to invite invidious comparison with its environment. The heart of the matter was that we had agreements which entitled us to maintain certain forces. We would not accept any unilateral determination regarding any withdrawal of forces. No doubt should be left on this score. We were prepared, as our note indicated, to renew discussions on the German question. If agreement seemed possible regarding Germany as a whole, the problem of Berlin would assume a different perspective. We were thus prepared to negotiate about Germany; but the isolated withdrawal of our forces from Berlin was not going to happen. We did not want war over Berlin, nor for that matter, over anything; but we were not prepared to avoid war by retreating wherever we were under pressure.

Mikoyan said that no one was asking for withdrawal. The Soviets were proposing the termination of the occupation, not the withdrawal of forces. Secretary Dulles apparently preferred a "tough line" policy and appeared to be trying to inspire himself to resist. The Soviet Government was not asking anyone to withdraw, it was asking for the problem to be settled by negotiation. With regard to unilateral action and terms of agreement, Mikoyan said that he knew the American juridical arguments, but could not agree with them. After all, the Soviet Union had not been asked about the termination of the American occupation in West Germany. On the other hand, it itself was suggesting negotiations before taking any action, which testified to goodwill on its part.

The Secretary stated that the greatest single obstacle in the present situation was the great doubt that existed in the United States regarding the dependability of Soviet promises. It was difficult to build a better world unless there existed confidence in each other's promises. He would not expect Mikoyan to agree with us regarding the dependability of Soviet promises but he would ask Mikoyan to agree on the fact that there was a strong feeling about this question in the United States. If there were a real desire on the part of the Soviet Union to develop peaceful relations and what it calls peaceful coexistence, it would be extremely necessary for the Soviet Union to avoid any actions which would lend credence to the suspicions in this country about the unreliability of its promises. Such topics were not pleasant to raise, but if the exchange of views were to be beneficial we should treat frankly with the matters that were on our minds.

Mikoyan nodded, and then said that it was wrong to cast any suspicion on the dependability of Soviet adherence to the agreements it undertakes. The Soviets were realistic and knew the value of goodwill. There was, however, no use in arguing this point. He was certain that he could find more instances for complaint by their side about nonfulfillment of promises than we could for complaint by us. The best thing was to find one point on which to test dependability, then go on to another, and so forth. Berlin could be taken, as an example. American troops were in West Germany, Soviet troops in East Germany. There could be an international commission set up to test the dependability of an agreement on the Berlin problem. The Soviets realized that if promises were broken here, it would be dangerous, because of the presence of their troops and ours. If there were an international commission, there would be a means for determining this. If, on the other hand, no positive steps were taken, the situation of distrust would continue.

Mikoyan then pointedly asked the Secretary whether he thought the Soviet Union wanted war. The Secretary said, no. Then he asked Mikoyan whether he thought the United States wanted war. Mikoyan said that he did not think the United States wanted war now, but the United States had set up bases around the Soviet Union and this gave ground for suspicion as to what might happen in the future. These bases were not there to play football. The Secretary said that Mikoyan had raised a matter which touched upon the major question of collective security. There could be a talk about this at some other time.

After checking his calendar, the Secretary said that he would make the full day of January 19th available for talks with Mikoyan and possibly some time on January 20th. The President of Argentina would arrive on the latter day for a State Visit and thus there was a question of whether any time would be available in the course of that day. The Secretary said he would have to go over his schedule to see whether any time could be arranged for that day as well. During the conversations on January 19, arrangements could be made for Mikoyan's call on the President. The Secretary remarked that the talk today had been very useful in helping to prepare our minds for more extensive and substantial talks later on.

Mikoyan said that there was one question he would like to touch upon in preparation for the next meeting. In doing so, he was speaking frankly and not diplomatically. Was it the intention of the United States to have an agreement signed in Geneva or did it intend to set up difficulties to prevent reaching agreement? The reason why he mentioned this was that although agreement had been reached on four articles of a draft treaty, there was one position taken by the American side which aroused Soviet suspicions. There were other points such as the U.S. "year-by-year" formula, which were disputable, but probably a compromise could be found. But this one position was the main problem. The United States proposed that decisions in the Control Commission would be taken by majority vote and not by agreement among the members of the Commission. The United States would thereby always have a majority as it had in the UN. To agree to this would amount to agreeing to American dictate regarding other questions. The United States was aware that the Soviet Union had never accepted this when it was much weaker. It certainly would not do so now. If the United States continued to insist on majority vote, there would be no agreement and more time would be lost.

The Secretary said that, in answer to the first question, the United States was very eager to have agreement. Mikoyan had spoken about trying to gain more confidence on a step-by-step basis. We believed that agreement on this problem could be a useful beginning in such a process. As to the particular point about voting raised by Mikoyan, the Secretary said that he was not personally very familiar with this issue nor did he know just how we had put forward our position. He did feel that if the Control Commission was supposed to have a certain mobility and if the veto power nullified this mobility, we would be opposed to it. He would look into the technical aspects of this problem and be prepared to discuss them with Mr. Mikoyan later.

The Secretary said that he hoped Mikoyan would discuss economic and trade questions with Mr. Dillon while he was here. Ambassador Menshikov said that he would get in touch with us and make the arrangements for this.

The Secretary

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The Secretary said that he was glad to have this exchange of views with Mr. Mikoyan. He recognized that the latter's visit to the United States was concrete evidence of the desire of the Soviet Union to establish a more understanding relationship. Mikoyan remarked that this was quite true. The Secretary said that after Mikoyan toured around the country for two weeks he expected him to come back to Washington Americanized. Mikoyan replied that he had come here for a different purpose and that he hoped for acceptable specific proposals from Secretary Dulles.